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EDUCATIONAL COMMENT

EXPERIENCING

That one sure test of a student's, or for that matter a teacher's, experience with a subject is his ability to interpret it, to share it socially, was the assertion of Professor F. M. Rarig, of the University of Minnesota, speaking at the annual convention of the National Council of Teachers of English in Washington Thanksgiving week-end. In brief the speaker said:

"The teaching of any subject is an art. What has a teacher to teach? Facts, dates, chemical formula, battles, political campaigns, plays, poems, short stories? Can any of these things be taught? Edna St. Vincent Millay has written:

'Euclid alone has looked on beauty bare.' The teacher who has profoundly experienced mathematics out of the wealth of his experience can infect others possessed of mathematical aptitudes with a desire to experience mathematics for themselves. His students accept such of his instruction as they can assimilate. Miss Millay is said to have failed her course in mathematics at Vassar, but she acquired her own poet's experience of geometry. A teacher has nothing to teach but his experience. He

may drone out information to students who force themselves to listen and accept writer's cram because they must have notes to cram, but it is only when his lecture becomes alive with his own experience of his materials that he works a change in his listeners, so that they never again will be as they were before.

"I once took a course in Shakespeare under a well-known Elizabethan scholar. Here was a copious erudition, but facts, instead of being used to bury Shakespeare, were used to bring him to life. His age, his characters, his theatre, his shrewd sense were all recreated for us, and no important bit of dialogue was let go by until the intentions of the characters had been indicated by reading aloud. It was only when the dialogue was well read that it came to life and the essence of drama was experienced. The data of scholarship were marshalled to shed light from every possible angle on the intentions and actions of the characters as implied in the dialogue. It was a working principle of this great teacher that verbal explanations are a means to imaginative re-creation, not an end in themselves. His students were examined on the factual data of the courses, but the final test of their experience of Shakespeare in the classroom from day to day was their reading aloud. In his practice, scholarship re-created Shakespeare; Shakespeare did not exist for the sake of scholarship.

"Just as the emotional realities of dramatic dialogue cannot be explained in words but must be socially shared through the symbolic activity of speech, so also should the teacher of literature be able to infect his students with his emotional experience of essays, poetry, and fiction. By the use of words, the creative writer stimulates his readers to reinstate their own experience in significant patterns. Our imaginations create out of the elements of our own experience the scenes, characters, actions, and rhythms that for us constitute the illusion

of life which the author seeks to imitate. Students have been so drilled in the habit of depending for salvation on the printed page and on their notebooks that most of them have never learned to analyze their own experience and relate it to what they read. The infectious power of good oral reading consists in the fact that by the use of direct suggestion a good reader is able to make literature a living experience, rather than a textbook."

NOT TOO MUCH LOVE

Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, speaking over a Columbia broadcast the evening of November 18, urged upon her listeners the importance of handling young children so as to prevent their developing a sense of timidity or fear.

"It is very easy," she said, "to frighten a child into deceit. We must realize that often we seem very much more terrifying because of our size and strength, and that even a raised voice to the tender ears of a child may be a very menacing and terrifying thing. This sense of fear is one of the worst things that can happen to any child, and here the home and the school are equally responsible.

"Parents must build up a sense of trust and confidence, otherwise their future hold upon the child is endangered. Small children need security, a sense that they are well taken care of, that the grown-ups around them are fair and just and understand them, and are kind. One of the tragedies of the times which we have been going through is that so many children, even very young ones, have lost their sense of security because it has gone out of the homes in which they live. But even in other times many a child in a home moderately comfortable in a material way, fails in gaining a sense of real security because around them they lack the love and understanding which instinctively makes them trust the world. I doubt if too much love ever hurt

a child as long as it was an unselfish love, but children who grow up with too much dependence upon their parents have been loved selfishly and their parents have not trained them with the idea that they must stand on their own feet. It is a fine distinction and a difficult one sometimes to love enough and yet not too much, for it is extremely pleasant to have our children depend upon us, and yet here again the training should begin with the very earliest years in order to enable them when they reach young manhood and young womanhood to take up their responsibilities without too much difficulty and suffering on their part."

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC BULLETINS

Publication of its illustrated Geographic News Bulletins for teachers was resumed early in October by the United Geographic Society at Washington, D. C.

These bulletins are issued weekly, five bulletins to the weekly set, for thirty weeks of the school year. They embody pertinent facts for classroom use from the stream of geographic information that pours daily into The Society's headquarters from every part of the world. The bulletins are illustrated from The Society's extensive file of geographic photographs.

Teachers are requested to apply early for the number of these bulletins desired. They are obtainable only by teachers, librarians, and college students. Teachers may order bulletins in quantities for class use, to be sent to one address, but 25 cents must be remitted for each subscription. The bulletins are issued as a service, not for financial profit, by the National Geographic Society as a part of its program to diffuse geographic information.

STABILIZATION, NOT STERILIZATION

To me it is incredible that, in a world of tragically unfilled human need, we should now set out upon the quixotic attempt to increase welfare by destroying wealth or declining to create it. Our ancestors fought valiantly over the centuries to conquer famine. Are we now to say that their conquest has been too decisive? After the sweat and science of generations have brought us out of an economy of scarcity into an economy of plenty, are we to confess that we are incapable of managing plenty, and deliberately legislate a modified famine in just those sections of our economic enterprise where production has proved most efficient. I think history will pass a bitter judgment upon us if we take this road in dealing with the difficulties now confronting our farms and our factories.

Scientific and technical leadership has abolished the physical necessity of poverty on this continent. It remains for political and economic leadership to abolish the social fact of poverty and its milder manifestation, under-consumption. Science and the machine have brought us to the threshold of a social millenium, but we have lacked the wit to unlock the door. Instead of planning to adjust ourselves to the half-hearted and insecure existence of a reinduced age of scarcity, we should not rest until we have found the key that will unlock the door into this social millenium of prosperity, leisure, and security which science and the machine have made possible. All the necessary tools are in our hands for emancipating the race from poverty, drudgery, and insecurity. If we now fail to effect this emancipation, we shall go down in history as traitors to the tools of our own creation. We must be careful lest a program of stabilization turn out to have been a process of sterilization. To play down our productive powers may well result in a sta-

bilization of want rather than a stabilization of welfare.—Glenn Frank, President of the University of Wisconsin.

Teachers know full well that it is only in the fertile soil of education and preparation, that democratic principles can grow into co-operation, understanding, and the fulfillment of our best hopes.—JESSIE GRAY, President, National Education Association.

The teachers of the United States constitute the real brain trust of our country. More power to this brain trust.—DANIEL A. POLING, President, World's Christian Endeavor Union.

THE READING TABLE

A WRITER' MANUAL AND HANDBOOK. By Paul P. Kies, in collaboration with Valeda Brockway, Ella E. Clark, Andrew J. Green and Royal A. Gettman. New York: F. S. Crofts & Co. 1934. 243 pp.

In these days of loose grammatical constructions, it is a pleasure to find a manual in which practice is given in diagraming. The chapters are so arranged that the sections on this subject can be omitted, if the class needs no training in it. The average group will not find such practice superfluous, however.

A Writer's Manual and Workbook emphasizes the fundamental principles of composition and provides ample drill material. It recommends itself to the teacher because the exercises can be quickly graded with the use of a correction chart in the front of the volume, and to the student because the workbook is so arranged that the amount of writing is reduced to a minimum. The practice sheets are meant to be torn from the book. The text is complete for purposes of reference and can be adapted easily to the needs of lower, average, and more advanced classes. Used with a collection of readings, it offers sufficient material for most college courses in freshman English.

E. T. F.